1609/2702.

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LETTER

FROM

THE MOST REVEREND

DOCTOR BUTLER,

TITULAR ARCHBISHOP OF CASHEL,

TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

LORD VISCOUNT KENMARE.

DUBLIN:

PRINTED BY P. BYRNE, No. 108, GRAFTON-STREET.

M.DCC.LXXXVII.

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Thurles, December 27, 1786.

My Dear and Honoured Lord,

I AM not a little impatient to impart to your Lordſhip my Thoughts on a late Publication entitled, "THE PRESENT STATE OF THE CHURCH "OF IRELAND:" It is written by Doctor Woodward, Biſhop of Cloyne; and, in the ſhort ſpace of twelve days, has already paſſed through four Editions. Whoever has ſeen the Addreſs to the Nobility and Gentry of the Proteſtant Church, and reads this Second Pamphlet, cannot but look upon

them as *both* deſigned to undo all that has been done in favour of Roman Catholics; as they tend to undermine the Primary Title the Roman Catholics had to the protection of Government and the confidence of their Fellow-Subjects. The unjuſt and falſe ſtrictures his Lordſhip makes on the ſincerity of the Oaths of the Roman Catholic Biſhops, concur to effect this in the minds of thoſe who can or will be impoſed on by what his Lordſhip ſo confidently aſſerts. For certainly, if the Oaths of Roman Catholic Prelates can no more be depended on, all Claim to a legal exiſtence for us in the ſtate ceaſes. We are all deſigning and moſt dangerous enemies; like the viper in the fable, we only ſought the warmth of protection to gnaw the boſom which gave the reviving heat. His Lordſhip, to eſtabliſh and enforce what he advances with regard to our Oaths, by ſome New Argument which, from not having been uſed before, had never been blunted by the ſhield of truth, brings forth a letter of a Monſignor Ghilini, Nuncio at Bruſſels, written in the year 1768, from amidſt the duſt of oblivion, where it would otherwiſe have, as it deſerved, remained till doomſday; notwithſtanding the moſt ſtrangely miſapplied encomiums beſtowed on it by Doctor Bourke: Encomiums, which I know, from the letters the ſaid

Nuncio

Nuncio wrote to me, before I left the Continent, expreſſive of his own alarmed feelings, after cool reflection, on the impropriety and indiſcretion of ſaid Letter, he would have willingly ſpared the Doctor. Nothing to be ſure, but an *Enthuſiaſtic* partiality for *Scholaſtic Opinions*, which Doctor Bourke, perhaps, had formerly, when profeſſor, defended, (as *ſome* Ultramontaniſts have done, to to their reproach and the diſcredit of Religion, with as much warmth of debate as if thoſe opinions had been acknowledged Articles of Faith, which they were ſupporting againſt unbelievers) can any way extenuate Doctor Bourke's imprudence, to call it by no harſher name, in publiſhing ſuch a letter. The Doctor ſhould have reflected, that the opinions alluded to by the Nuncio, however unnoticed they may be ſuffered to paſs in a Country like Italy, where the Sovereign and all the Subjects are of the Roman Catholic Religion, they cannot be conſidered in the ſame light in this Kingdom, whereof the King and Principal Subjects are Proteſtants, and Two Thirds, at leaſt, of the Inhabitants are of our Communion. *Here* ſuch opinions, if maintained, could not but be prejudicial, by alarming the Sovereign, and being a conſtant ſource of jealouſy and diſſention betwixt Fellow Subjects.—This, I recall to mind,

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was what I alledged to Cardinal Marefuſchi, who was at the Time the Oath was propoſed, our Cardinal Protector, (that is, as Your Lordſhip knows, the Cardinal entruſted by his Holineſs with the *Superintendance* of our Eccleſiaſtical Affairs in Ireland,) as a *Reaſon* why the Roman Catholic Biſhops thought themſelves called upon to declare, in the public manner they did, that they found nothing in the Teſt of Allegiance, held out by the Legiſlature to the Roman Catholics of Ireland, contrary to the Principles of the Roman Catholic Faith: and, therefore, that the *Opinions* diſclaimed by that Oath never made part of our Creed. The Cardinal, in his anſwer, expreſſed the fulleſt Approbation of my ſentiments; which Approbation of his Eminence was afterwards confirmed by the Pope and the Congregation, de Propaganda Fide, approving alſo of the ſaid Teſt of Allegiance; of all which Approbations I have *Authentic Vouchers* by me; the *very* Letters written on the occaſion to and from the Sacred Congregation. I ſhewed *theſe* Letters to Lord Pery, when He was Speaker of the Houſe of Commons, at Sir Robert Staples's, and I ſhewed Him again, in Dublin, another Letter which I received from the ſame Congregation, two years after, expreſſive of their Eminencies' thanks for my diligence in fulfilling what I owed

owed to my ſtation and Religion, ſince the time I came into the Kingdom. Now, My Dear Lord, I hope I may venture to ſay, without riſking the imputation of vanity or falſhood, that I was moſt particularly warm and active in promoting the taking of the Teſt Oath, after I had publicly approved of it, at the head of my Suffragans, in the year 1775; an æra which I always called to mind with new-felt pleaſure; and conſequently, the Approbation of my Conduct, *during all that time*, was of itſelf, had I no other proofs of the Congregation's having approved the Teſt, Tantamount to an Approbation. Lord Pery, when I ſhewed him that Letter of the Congregation acknowledged it was; ſo did His Grace the Primate, when I had the Honour, on being introduced to him by Your Lordſhip, to mention it to him.

But that nothing might be wanting, in our power, to conſign the letter of the Nuncio to eternal oblivion, and that no One of our people might be ever affected by it, We, (I mean the Roman Catholic Prelates of Munſter) in a meeting we held at Thurles, ſoon after the one near Cork, in 1775, paſſed our *Decided Cenſure* upon the Hibernia Dominicana and its Supplement: which

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Cenſure We, indeed, at firſt, ſignified only to our Clergy; not thinking it prudent to make known to the People a Work of the ſtamp of the Hibernia Dominicana; which, from its being written in Latin, and bearing a Title which was not likely to attract the Attention even of Thoſe who underſtood that Language, would, as I ſaid before, in all probability have remained for ever unknown to them. Our Cenſure was well known at Rome, without being conſidered there, in the ſmalleſt degree, obnoxious to the Holy See. The Original, ſubſcribed to by the Biſhops, I providentially kept by Me; not knowing but the Time might come, when ſome one or other would, through ignorance or falſe zeal, profit of a diſcovery of the Nuncio's letter, and make uſe of it as a proper weapon to give what he might think the deadly blow to all our fond hopes of Protection and Confidence from Government and our Fellow Subjects. My Apprehenſion of ſuch an Event, Your Lordſhip ſees by Doctor Woodward's Work, was not groundleſs. At the ſame time had I not ſuch a Formal and Avowed Condemnation to produce, the letters from the Sacred Congregation and the Roman Catholic Biſhops of the whole Kingdom after the moſt mature deliberation, Approving the Teſt, whereby They ſolemn-

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ly declared, in the face of the whole world, their Diſbelief and Abhorrence of the *Opinions* alluded to by the Nuncio, was more than ſufficient to obviate the ill ground inſinuations His Lordſhip of Cloyne has held forth.

As a Public and Formal anſwer will, I hope, be given to his Lordſhip of Cloyne's ſtrictures I'll leave to the Writer thereof (that I may not ſpin out this letter to an unneceſſary length) to enlarge more fully on what I here only Sketch out. For a public Anſwer muſt be given. The Conſciouſneſs of our *Inviolable Attachment* to our Oaths of Allegiance; Our lively ſenſe of what we owe to our Sacred Characters; Our *ſincere* Wiſh to promote and preſerve that *long deſired* Mutual Confidence, which had happily begun to warm and link in Social Union the Minds of Perſons of different perſuaſions, call on us to repel, in the moſt Earneſt and Public Manner, any Attempt to undermine what cannot but be moſt precious to us.

The Author of the Public Reply to His Lordſhip's Strictures will not fail, I am confident, to paint in the moſt pathetic manner what Our Feelings muſt be, on ſeeing Ourſelves traduced as We are, to the Public; and That by the Very Biſhop to the Neighbourhood of whoſe Dioceſs I and my Suffra-

gans, the Roman Catholic Prelates of Munſter, had ſpeedily repaired, to oppoſe, *as far as in us lay*, with our United Efforts, in the morning of theſe Troubles, the unwarrantable Attempts made againſt Eccleſiaſtical Authority. His Lordſhip may be alſo more clearly informed by him of the nature of a Nuncio's Commiſſion, with regard to the Roman Catholics of this Kingdom: His Lordſhip will find it quite different from what he repreſents it; and that ſo far are a Nuncio's Sentiments from being looked upon as Deciſions of the Church, that Roman Catholic Biſhops have diſſented, and may diſſent from the Roman Legate, without apprehenſion of Guilt in all that does not affect the Eſtabliſhed Principles of Faith and Chriſtian Morality. In the Letter alluded to, Your Lordſhip cannot but have obſerved the Nuncio gives only *his own Notions*; which, ſtrange as they appear, can be eaſily accounted for, in One, who being educated in the Pope's Dominions, and being his Public Ambaſſador, may, from *too warm* a deſire of aggrandizing the Temporal Power of his Sovereign, extend too far the Prerogatives of his Spiritual Juriſdiction.

As to the Oath taken by the Roman Catholic Biſhops at their Conſecration, and printed in the Roman

man Pontifical, which Doctor Woodward brings forth as an *Auxiliary* Proof how little Our Oaths of Allegiance are to be depended on, I ſhall juſt obſerve, that His Lordſhip has entirely miſconceived both the intention and words of the Oath. A little reflection would have made His Lordſhip ſenſible, that ſaid Oath is *by no means inconſiſtent* with the Subjects Allegiance to his *Prince*; that Sovereigns as jealous and tenacious of Their Rights as Sovereigns can be, permit ſaid Oath to be taken by the Roman Catholic Biſhops in their Dominions: which They evidently never would conſent to, but would, on the contrary, ſtrenuouſly oppoſe, if They could think it infringed in the leaſt on their rights, or paved the way to *Papal Encroachments*. It is well known *this very Oath*, of which Doctor Woodward ſpeaks, is taken by all the Biſhops conſecrated in France, Germany, Spain, and in all the different Kingdoms and Republics on the Continent.—The Biſhops of the Republic of Venice *All* take it. Frapaolo himſelf, in his warm Defence of the Rights of the Venetian Republic againſt the Claims of the Court of Rome, (a work Doctor Woodward cannot be a Stranger to,) never points out to that jealous Senate the Oaths taken by Roman Catholic Biſhops at Their Conſecration, as affording a Ground to ſuſpect their Fealty to the State. This Oath was even taken in Holland, under the eyes of the States

themſelves, by the Pope's Vicar Apoſtolic for that Country, who muſt generally be a Biſhop, and conſequently conform to the Rubrics of the Pontifical, which He does without becoming obnoxious to the Dutch. The King of Pruſſia apprehends no danger from it to his Dominions, though He knows full well the Biſhops of Sileſia, of whoſe loyal ſentiments he is more particularly intereſted in being ſecure, take alſo ſaid Oath at their Conſecration. Nay, the King of Great Britain, Our Moſt Gracious Sovereign, Whom may the Almighty long preſerve, is no way alarmed at having a Roman Catholic Biſhop in Canada; being *fully* aſſured that a Roman Catholic Biſhop in Canada will be as Earneſt to oppoſe all Papal Encroachments as his Confreres in England were in oppoſing, (according even to his Lordſhip of Cloyne's acknowledgment, page 48) in the earlier days of the Britiſh Empire, thoſe of the *then* Sovereign Pontiffs. For every diſcerning Perſon cannot but know, on the leaſt reflection, that None of Us, to make uſe of the *very* Words of the Great *Boſſuet*, *Biſhop* of *Meaux*, every engage Ourſelves by this Oath to any Thing that is contrary to Our Conſcience, or the Service of our King and Country: far from thinking we prejudice *any* of Theſe, it is even expreſſed in the Oath, that We take it without Prejudice to our State, ſalvo meo ordine.

ordine. The Submiſſion which is ſworn to the Pope in Spirituals, is of a Different Order from what we naturally owe Our Prince in Temporals, and without proteſting, we have always well underſtood, that one does not interfere with the other.—So far that learned and judicious Prelate.

Your Lordſhip will find theſe very words of Boſſuet in the Beginning of the Firſt Chapter of the 7th book of the Variations:—They clearly account for ſaid Oath's being ſo Univerſally taken by all Roman Catholic Biſhops in both Catholic and Proteſtant States. The SALVO MEO ORDINE removes all fear of the Oath's injuring the Allegiance due to other Princes. The Oath itſelf at the beginning was only taken by the Biſhops of the Pope's Eccleſiaſtical Territories, Who from being Subjects of the Pope, as a Temporal Sovereign, ſwear Fealty to Him both in Spirituals and Temporals, which is not the caſe with Biſhops, Who do not belong to the Pope's Dominions; and hence, when a deſire of Conformity with the Biſhops that are immediately ſubject to the Pope, made it, by degrees, cuſtomary for the Roman Catholic Biſhops throughout the whole world to take ſaid Oath at their Conſecration, They all took care to profeſs *plainly and publicly*, by the clauſe SALVO MEO ORDINE, that they did not bind

bind themſelves down to any thing in ſaid Oath but in as far as it was compatible with the ſituation of every Biſhop under their reſpective Sovereigns, and the duty he eſſentially owes to Them. The Oath is almoſt of 800 years date; time, ſurely, ſufficient for every Sovereign to know the meaning of it.

The words of the Oath, *Hereticus perſequar & impugnabo*, which His Lordſhip of Cloyne repreſents as *ſo alarming* to the Proteſtant intereſt, far from meaning what His Lordſhip ſeems to think, imply nothing more than the obligation every Biſhop takes upon Himſelf, to be ever earneſt in oppoſing and refuting by the ſpiritual weapons of the Goſpel, all broachers of doctrines contrary to its Principles.

Theſe, My Dear Lord, are the Thoughts, which occurred to me on reading that part of Doctor Woodward's work, which attacks the conſcientious ſincerity of Roman Catholic Biſhops. Thoughts, which I was moſt anxious to communicate to a Nobleman of my own Religion, whoſe zealous and ſucceſsful exertions in ſuppreſſing the diſturbances in the County Kerry, have met with the deſerved applauſe of Government and of the Clergy of both Communions. On that account, I look

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up to your Lordſhip, as the beſt entitled to avail Yourſelf with every advantage of the facts I have mentioned, in order to prevent or efface the very unfavourable impreſſions Doctor Woodward's ſtrictures on us, may make or have made, on the public, by miſrepreſenting the Nuncio's letter as a Deciſion of our Church, and the Oath Biſhops take at their Conſecration, as incompatible with our Allegiance.

I have the honour to be,

With the ſincereſt attachment and eſteem,

My Dear Lord,

Your Lordſhip's moſt obedient ſervant

And affectionate kinſman,

JAMES BUTLER.

FINIS.

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up to your Lordship, as the best entitled to trust Yourself with every paragraph of this Letter mentioned, in order to prevent or detect the very unreasonable imputations Doctor Woodward's advices on us may make or have made, on the public, by misrepresenting the Transaction as a Deception of our Clergy, and the Oath Bishops take at their Consecration, as incompatible with our Allegiance.

I have the honour to be,

With the sincerest attachment and esteem,

My Dear Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient servant,

And affectionate Brother,

JAMES BUTLER.

DUBLIN